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stopped. Soon afterward he was observed to slink toward a sofa on one side of the room, and to disappear beneath it.

Meanwhile the members of the band came in by threes and fours at a time, and made free with whatever there was to eat and drink on the tables. The plundering of the chateau was next in order. The plate, jewelry, and other portable valuables were collected in bundles and laid in one of the large saloons, awaiting the signal of departure. After having made this disposition of such things as he desired to take away, the captain, still wearing the black mask, approached the old lady, and in very courteous terms thanked her for the entertainment of the evening. They were now, he said, about to take their departure, but before leaving the chateau, he begged that the ladies would honor him and his companions with a dance. He had observed quite an extensive pond near the chateau, covered with beautifully smooth ice which looked as if it had been cleared for a skating party. If madame would permit, he could have the shores lighted by torches, and would feel greatly honored if madame and her lady guests would adjourn from the ball-room to that more romantic spot. The gentlemen, he added, would be permitted to enjoy the spectacle from the banks.

The request was necessarily of the nature of a command, and Madame de Pulaski agreed with the best show of graciousness she could muster. Skates, cloaks, hats and furs were donned in haste, and the whole party repaired to the pond. The gentlemen, still bound, were seated along the margin. The surface was lighted up with many flaming torches, which glanced on the smooth, clear ice, and sent strange lights and deep shadows among the bordering woods. The leader insisted on Madame Pulaski's putting on skates, and opening the ball on the ice with him. Unwilling as she was, she was forced to submit; and it must be allowed that she went through her part of the performance with grace and ease. The old lady used, in after years, to say that she enjoyed the fun exceedingly, and was very much taken by the courtesy and gallantry of the robber chief. On conducting his elderly partner to a seat, the gay freebooter requested the honor of her daughter's hand for the next round. Louise would gladly have refused. Her heart was full of her lover. Where was he? She knew, now, that her aunt would never press her again to marry the craven fellow who was last seen crawling under a sofa, to get out of harm's way; but her soul was full of forebodings. Could the robbers have captured him? Her thoughts were interrupted by the approach of the robber chieftain, who courteously led her out upon the ice. She submitted in silence. The man was an accomplished skater, as was Louise, and they made a very handsome couple as they glided gracefully over the smooth surface. Not a word was spoken. Louise and her partner and the people on the banks were as dumb as statues.

At length—it seemed an hour to Louise—her partner, without a word, led her back to where her mother sat. All hoped that this singular ball was at an end, and that they would be permitted to return to the chateau. But as Louise took her seat, the bandit leader stooped over her, and before she was aware of his intention, pressed a kiss on her lips. With a sharp cry she sprang to her feet exclaiming, "Had my Fritz been here, you would not have dared insult me."

Scarcely had she uttered the words, when a pistol-shot rang through the air, and the bandit fell at her very feet. There was a short struggle where his followers were standing on the bank, and the next moment Captain Fritz, with a dozen comrades, stood before the astonished company. The bandits, surprised and overpowered, had been killed or captured; the prisoners were immediately released, and all returned with great rejoicing to the chateau. The baron emerged from under the sofa just as they entered the

saloon. Nobody thought him worthy of notice, and he soon ordered his horse and rode away.

The old lady was profuse of acknowledgments to Captain Fritz, and too grateful for the deliverance from the bandits to make curious inquiries as to his sudden appearance at the critical moment with a large party of friends. Nor was she ever undeceived. Louise, however, suspected something, and was not to be put off. The captain made a full confession of his intended practical joke, the nature of which the reader has already surmised. Louise was shocked at first; but in consideration of the captain's timely arrival and efficient service, and partly because he was so very penitent and humble, she was induced to forgive him. Her aunt was easily persuaded to believe that the assistance came from a party of masquerading students whom the captain had met near the chateau.

There is no need to pursue the story further. As Captain Fritz often said to himself, "All's well that ends well;" and who can doubt that all ended well with Louise and her gallant lover?—*E. B. Leonard.*



"I come from haunts of coot and hern,
I make a sudden sally

And sparkle out among the fern,
To bicker down a valley."

A BARE CHANCE.

I've got him at last —
Or he's got me:
Right soon I'll know
Which it will be!
You can scare some bears —
But he don't scare:
"Twon't do at all
To miss that bear!

Stand still, Pacquita!
Good horse, be still;
You needn't shake so, —
The growl don't kill:
It's the teeth that picked
Them bones so bare —
But they sha'n't pick ours —
I shall hit that bear!

Mind your eye now,
Fool of a bear!
I intend to settle
A slug in there; —
Would prefer your heart —
Crack! — true to a hair!
I sorter guessed
I should fetch that bear!

— *S. Lang.*

DEATH WARRANT OF MARY STUART.

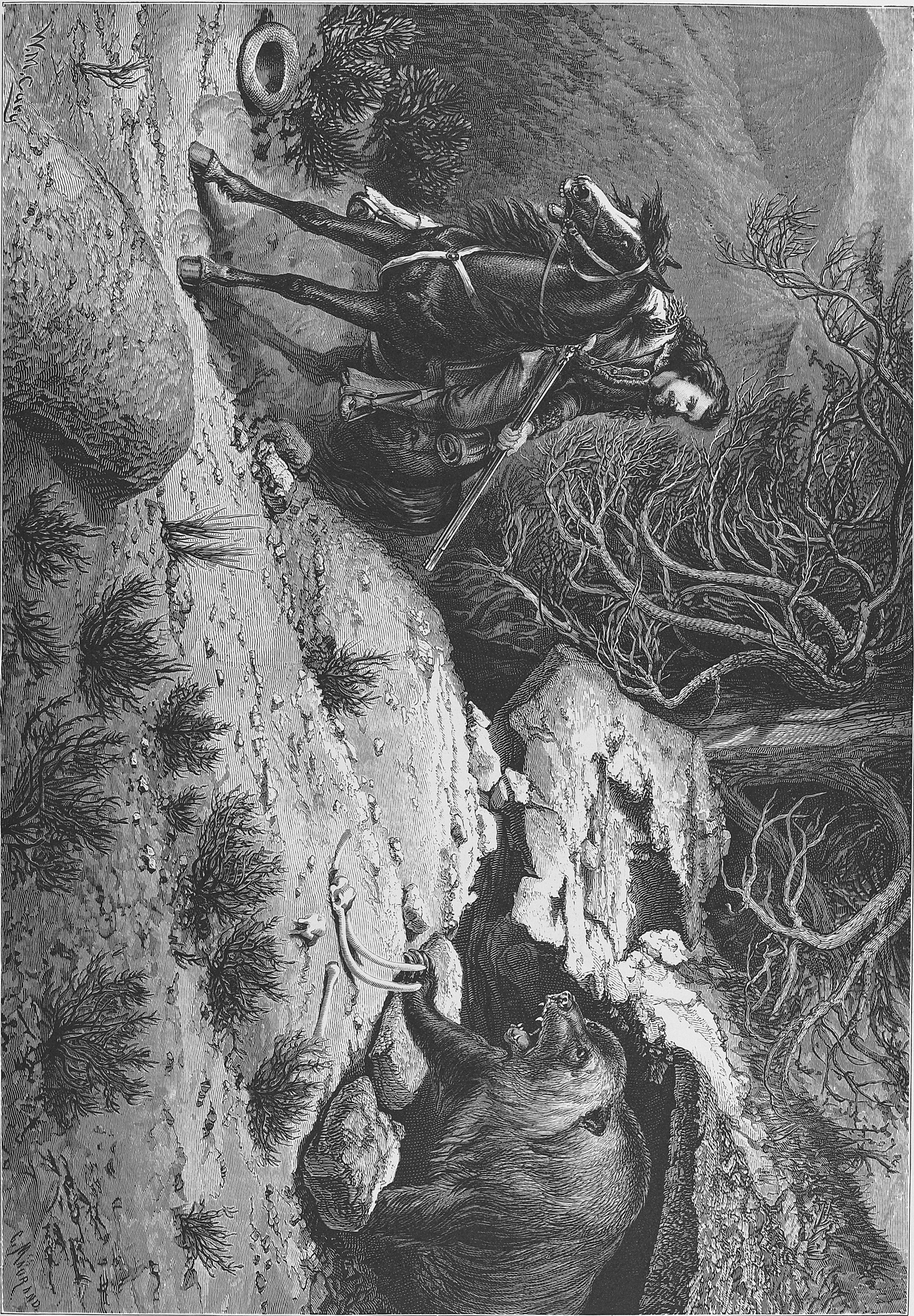
THE character of Mary Queen of Scots is one of those historical problems which the historians have not succeeded in solving. All who have written about her have written under a bias: to one class of minds she is a miracle of wickedness, to another she is a wronged and noble woman, who suffered martyrdom for her religion. Mr. Froude attacks her memory and Mr. Meline defends it, and each successfully, if the verdict of the unhistoric reader may be trusted. Neither has decided, except for himself, what manner of woman she was; and, perhaps, the only writer who could have decided that vexed question was Shakspeare. Swinburne touched the clew, we think, in his tragedy of "Chastelard," but — Swinburne is not Shakspeare. One thing, however, is certain, whatever else is doubtful, viz., that her life was troubled and dark, and her death awfully tragic. Her long imprisonment is still a theme for poets and romancers, and her last days a subject that artists the world over delight to handle.

The last week of her life, and the events with which it was crowded, are graphically described by Mr. Froude. It began at Greenwich on the 11th of February, 1587, with the signing of her death warrant by Elizabeth. She shuffled after affixing her signature, and sought about for a way in which to inculcate others, and exculpate herself, in case the execution should fail to commend itself to her subjects. Hatton and Burleigh put their heads together, and called a Council, without her knowledge, and all who were present agreed that the Queen of Scots must die, as their royal mistress had ordered. Lord Kent and Lord Shrewsbury were the Commissioners named to execute the warrant. It was carried to them, with the necessary instructions, by Secretary Beale, who by dint of hard riding reached Fotheringhay on Sunday evening, February 16th. "The purpose of his coming was not made known in the castle. Early on Monday he went in search of Lord Shrewsbury, while a message was despatched to the Sheriff of Northamptonshire, to be in attendance on Wednesday morning. On Monday evening the Earl of Kent came. Shrewsbury appeared on Tuesday before noon, and when the early castle dinner was over they sent a servant to the Queen of Scots with a request to be admitted to her presence. Shrewsbury had not seen her since she had passed from under his charge. He had not been on the Commission which tried her; illness had prevented him from attending the last Parliament, and he had taken no public part in the prosecution; and although he had signified privately as his personal opinion that her death was necessary, it

could not have been without emotion that he was once more brought into a brief relation with her in so terrible a form. Kent was an austere Puritan, to whom she was merely a wicked woman overtaken at last by the punishment which she had too long deserved and escaped. Briefly, solemnly, and sternly they delivered their awful message. They informed her that they had received a commission under the great seal, to see her executed, and she was told that she must prepare to suffer on the following morning. She was dreadfully agitated. For a moment she refused to believe them. Then, as the truth forced itself upon her, tossing her head in disdain and struggling to control herself, she called her physician, and began to speak to him of money that was owed to her in France. At last it seems that she broke down altogether, and they left her with a fear either that she would destroy herself in the night, or that she would refuse to come to the scaffold, and that it might be necessary to drag her there by violence."

She was ready to meet her fate the next morning, and she met it as became a Queen. She ascended the scaffold calmly, like Charles I.,

"And bowed her comely head,
Down as upon a bed."



A BARE CHANCE.—W. M. CARY.